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February 14, 1979

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STUDY  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by Max von Zur-Muehlen\*

In the past year a number of studies have drawn attention to the need to examine higher education from a national perspective. Two reports in particular have suggested establishment of a national body. The first study by the Study of the AUCC recommended that

a National Institute of Higher Education be established, to be funded by the federal and provincial governments, which would use such resources as those of Statistics Canada to conduct research, to define areas of concern, and to provide facts and analyses of them to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. 1

In follow-up, the AUCC appointed a "Committee of Three"<sup>2</sup> to prepare a response to this and the other recommendations of the study.

After five years of deliberation, the Commission on Graduate Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences contended in its Summary Volume

a modest research institute is needed. We are not sure where such an institute should be located. It seems likely that a federal department would be an uneasy home, because the institute would have to have close relations with provincial agencies and because its research would touch on aspects of provincial jurisdiction. The AUCC might be a more appropriate agency, because it is more independent of the federal government and it already has an excellent

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, A.U.C.C. Policy Studies, Study No. 1: The Role of the University with Respect to Enrolments and Career Opportunities, Admission Policies, Continuing Education and Community Colleges. December, 1977, p. 101.

Mr. James Gray, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, Dalhousie University; Dr. D.T. Hayes, Dean of Education, Brandon University; Dean Peter Morand, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Applied Engineering, Ottawa University.

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research library .... The need for sustained research on higher education in Canada seems to be undeniable. It also seems clear that the federal government should contribute financially to this research. 3

It is of interest to note that in a Private Member's Bill, Mr. Hal Herbert, Member of Parliament, proposed that the government consider "... the advisability of establishing an office of education, to conduct research in the provinces with the co-operation of the provincial governments."<sup>4</sup> ... The idea was extensively and constructively debated.

The author presented a paper, "Canadian Concerns in Higher Education", to an AUCC meeting in October 1977 and a similar report, in collaboration with T.H.B. Symons,<sup>5</sup> in the Higher Education Group Colloquium series at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the spring of 1978. The author observed that, in education, Canadian society seems to have been reluctant to plan systematically for the future. This aversion may have its roots in Canada's history where immediate tasks overshadowed long-term concerns and there was certain hesitancy to undertake risk-oriented ventures. This reluctance has also been attributed partly to the Protestant ethic which made planning seem an act of arrogance, besides being associated with Marxism. 6

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3. Commission on Graduate Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Summary Volume, September 1978, p. 96, published by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.
4. Commons Debates, November 3, 1978, p. 799.
5. Sole Commissioner of the Commission on Canadian Studies and Vice-President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
6. "Canadian Concerns in Higher Education", presented at the Higher Education Group Colloquium Series, January 1978; The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Copies of the presentation in English or French are available from the author.



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A small group in the Ottawa area has considered the desirability of establishing a "National Institute of Higher Education", and reviewed the mechanisms available for such an undertaking. Those who participated at the informal exploratory meetings were encouraged by the recent formation of two Consultative Groups by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The Groups plan to review the research support available to two professional disciplines, Management and Administrative Studies, and Law. It is hoped that, based on this precedent, such a task force might eventually be set up to examine research and graduate study on higher education.

For many years the Commission on Canadian Studies has been investigating issues in higher education. One of the chapters in the Commission's forthcoming Third Volume (Symon's Report: "To Know Ourselves") will be entitled "The Study of Canadian Higher Education". It is to be hoped that it will contain specific recommendations.

Several academic associations and government departments have conducted work in the field of current post-secondary education, either generating data themselves or cataloguing the work of others:

- The Higher Education Group at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto published an overview of its activities with its 1977-78 Annual Report.<sup>7</sup> It is also conducting a series of workshops in 1978-79 on "Ideas of the University".

7. Higher Education Group, Annual Report, 1977-78. Copies are available from Dr. Charles E. Pascal, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.



- As part of its 12-country series, the International Council for Educational Development published a monograph, "Systems of Higher Education: Canada", (by Edward Sheffield, Duncan D. Campbell, Jeffrey Holmes, L.B. Kymlicka, and James W. Whitelaw).<sup>8</sup>
- The 1978 Inventory of Research into Higher Education in Canada, an AUCC annual, is available, and the 1979 edition is in preparation. These inventories draw attention to many studies that are not in the public domaine.
- Also helpful are the lists that have been prepared by the AUCC Library and the references published regularly in the bibliographical section of The Canadian Journal of Higher Education.
- For the Twelfth Quinquennial Congress of the Universities of the Commonwealth, Statistics Canada prepared a 111-page report, From the Sixties to the Eighties - A Statistical Portrait of Canadian Higher Education.<sup>9</sup> This report has received a widespread circulation. In addition, Dr. Zoltan Zsigmond of the Education, Science and Culture Division has published special studies like Out-of-School - Into the Labour Force (a projection of the number of young people who will leave the education system in the next decade and an assessment of their job market prospects) and A Historical

8. Edward Sheffield co-ordinated this project. This monograph has been published by the International Council for Educational Development. A Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto, Sheffield now lives in Ottawa and takes an active interest in higher education.

9. This summary is being reprinted, and will soon be available from the Education, Science and Culture Division.



Compendium of Education Statistics, as well as the annual reports, Advanced Statistics of Education and Education in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

Statistics Canada has invited members of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education to a colloquium on March 12, 1979, in Ottawa, to discuss the data needs of the 1980s.

In a widely quoted presentation at a Carleton University conference, John Roberts, the Secretary of State, recalled that at a recent First Minister's Conference:

the Prime Minister corrected one of the provincial premiers who referred to education as an exclusive provincial responsibility. The Prime Minister said that it was not so, that the federal government also had responsibilities in the field of education. And his statement passed without contradiction. 11

This may indicate that the concept of a formal national structure to study and co-ordinate some aspects of post-secondary education would be greeted more enthusiastically than has hitherto been the case.

This short, rather eclectic description of some recent activities directed toward the study and research of higher education has attempted to identify some of the more prominent issues.

10. Out-of-School - Into the Labour Force, Cat. No.81-570 August 1978; Advanced Statistics of Education, 1978-79, Cat. No. 81-220, August 1978; Education in Canada, 1977, Cat. No. 81-229, June 1978; and A Historical Compendium of Education Statistics, Cat. No. 81-568, May 1978, published by the Projections Section of the Education, Science and Culture Division.
11. Address by the Honourable John Roberts, Secretary of State of Canada to the Conference "The Humanities in Society: Towards a New Coalition", Ottawa, Ontario, November 22, 1978, p. 2.



In conclusion, several quotes from an address by Dr. Hamm-Brücher, co-author of an O.E.C.D. report on Canadian education, reveal how our situation appears to an outside observer:<sup>12</sup>

The second most disputed issue was federal involvement, specifically the claim that while no policy exists, federal participation in education occurs under other labels - for example, manpower policy, science policy, research support, student assistance, and bilingualism. ... Federal-provincial relations in education are almost schizophrenic, and constitute a major stumbling block.

Canada has too few institutions concerned with education from a national perspective.

This lack of what is called "Bildungsforschung" and "Bildungsplanung" in Germany (research and planning in education) is one of the weaknesses perceived by the OECD examiners, and the situation has not changed since 1975. Nor have the goals of Canadian education become clearer, although this, too, was another desideratum identified in the Report.

The non-involvement of federal political institutions in education should, in view of their responsibility for major national decisions, be overcome.

12. This speech "Multilateral Co-operation in Education: Possibilities and Limitations" by Dr. Hamm-Brücher, Minister of State for the Federal Republic of Germany, will be printed in a forthcoming issue of the Canadian Journal of Higher Education. Mrs. Hamm-Brücher had drafted the Reviews of National Policies for Education, Canada, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, published in 1976.





